PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 7 September 2026

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	S Simpson	D Temple
	J Treloar	R Smith
	R Crouch	T Ashby (In place of J Doughty)
	D Edwards-Hughes	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Nicholas Brown	Operations Manager
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
	Adam Cook	Project Officer
Others:	None.	

PR409 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Doughty. Councillor T Ashby attended as substitute.

PR410 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

PR411 **MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2026.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 1 June 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair

PR412 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

There was no public participation.

PR413 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received the report and verbal update of the Responsible Financial Officer concerning the financial position of items under the remit of the Committee for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 July 2026.

Members were advised that the accounts represented the first four months of the financial year and that expenditure remained broadly in line with expectations. It was noted that some expenditure and income patterns reflected the seasonal nature of Council facilities and activities.

Discussion took place regarding the operation of the Splash Park following the introduction of extended opening hours during the summer season. Members heard that usage levels remained positive and that expenditure was anticipated to remain within the approved budget. A Member requested that the amended operating hours be maintained and therefore considered as such in the 2027/28 budget setting process.

In considering future budget requirements, Members were referred by the Deputy Town Clerk to comments received through the Council's Annual Residents Survey, which had identified requests for additional benches, bins and play equipment across recreation and play areas. Particular reference was made to requests for picnic benches at Ralegh Crescent Play Area and potential improvements to recreational facilities at West Witney.

A Member also raised a request received from a constituent regarding the possible installation of a stair rail feature at the skate park. Officers agreed to investigate the feasibility and likely cost of such a facility and report back to a future meeting.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted; and
2. That, the management accounts of for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 July 2026 be approved.
3. That, Officers prepare estimates for revenue, capital and special revenue projects identified by Members for consideration during the 2027/28 budget-setting process.

PR414 **SPORTS PITCHES**

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager who was introduced to Members ahead of the item. His report concerned sports pitches and associated facilities.

Members heard that the cricket season had concluded and the football season had commenced successfully, with 18 matches having been played across the Council's pitches during the opening weekend. Positive feedback had been received from clubs, particularly regarding pitch quality and communication with Officers. The Committee congratulated Officers on the successful start to the football season practically following such a dry summer period.

The Committee received the notes of the Football Season Meeting held on 18 August 2026. Members who had attended the meeting confirmed that it had been a positive and successful engagement with local clubs, providing a valuable opportunity to discuss facilities, future developments and operational matters.

The Committee received an update on the future of the cricket square at The Leys. Members noted that despite repeated efforts over a number of years to secure cricket use of the facility, no organisation had expressed a formal commitment to utilise the square. Concerns had also been raised regarding the suitability of the location given the increasing recreational use of the surrounding area and the associated health and safety considerations.

During discussion, Members reflected on the historic purpose of The Leys as land provided for sport and recreation following the First World War, with the intention of promoting health, wellbeing and physical activity within the town. It was noted that the Council, as custodian of the land, should seek to maximise its recreational use for the benefit of the community in whichever way was best.

It was further noted that a final expression of interest process remained underway, with a deadline of 30 September 2026 for any organisation wishing to utilise the cricket square. Members considered whether a decision on the future of the facility should be delegated to Officers following the expiry of that deadline. Following debate, a proposal was made that, subject to no suitable expression of interest being received, Officers be authorised to discontinue the cricket square and reconfigure the area for football and wider recreational use.

Upon being put to the vote, the proposal was carried. The vote being:

For	Seven
Against	Nil
Abstention	One

Recommended:

1. That, the report and updates be noted.
2. That, subject to no suitable expression of interest being received by 30 September 2026, Officers be authorised to discontinue the cricket square at The Leys and reconfigure the area for football and wider recreational use.

PR415 **WEST WITNEY PROJECTS**

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer concerning the West Witney Projects.

Members were advised that progress had been made regarding the installation of the new electricity supply serving both the clubhouse and depot. Additionally, they heard that following discussions with relevant stakeholders, a trenching solution had now been agreed, providing a more practical and cost-effective route to completion.

The Committee also received an update regarding contractor performance and noted that officers had reviewed the contractual obligations and that they continued to work closely with clubs and user groups to minimise disruption arising from ongoing delays.

Members commended Officers for their continued management of the project and stakeholder engagement.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

Cllr J Treloar left the meeting at 6:38pm

PR416 **RALEGH CRESCENT MUGA/MUSA**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Project Officer regarding the Ralegh Crescent MUGA/MUSA project.

Members were advised that procurement issues affecting progress by West Oxfordshire District Council had now been resolved and that additional resources had been allocated by WODC to progress the tender process. Regular meetings had been established to expedite the project.

Although not related to this project, Members welcomed the completion of a path at King George V recreation ground which had been recently completed by Oxfordshire County Council.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

Cllr J Treloar rejoined the meeting at 6:43pm

PR417 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

PR418 **WEST WITNEY PROJECTS - PART 2**

The Committee received the confidential update of the Project Officer regarding the ongoing delays to the West Witney Project. Members were advised of the actions being taken in relation to contractor performance and project delivery.

The Committee noted that a full update, including any financial, contractual and governance implications, would be presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee at its meeting on 28 September 2026.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

The meeting closed at: 6.55 pm

Chair